

Balmoral International Group review – St. Nicolas



We know the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg as one of Europe's smallest countries. Despite that though, the place rich in culture and heritage is also a land full of festivities and happy people. One of the most renowned reasons for Luxembourgers to celebrate is St. Nicolas.

St Nicolas, who lived in the 4th century, was bishop of Lycia in Asia Minor. His life is shrouded in many legends. For those who do not know, one of St. Nicolas' escapades is when he miraculously saved three children from the salting tub of a crazed butcher. St Nicolas has thus become the patron saint of children and on the eve of his feast, which is on 6 December, he descends from heaven, accompanied by his black servant Ruprecht (called Houseker

by Luxembourgers) and a donkey laden with presents, to reward little children who have been good. Children who have misbehaved receive a Rutt, or switch. Sounds familiar? Yup. You guessed it right. The story and identity of St. Nicolas is more or less like Santa Claus although we all have different version on it.

In some towns, the holy man and his servant dressed in black go from house to house late on 5 December carrying presents to youngsters. If so, parents will have made the "arrangements". Usually, however, children rise early the next morning, on 6 December, to discover their plates overflowing with chocolates and presents, and the saint nowhere in sight. Sometimes, a town or one of its associations has arranged for the Kleeschen (the Luxembourg diminutive for St Nicolas) to make a public appearance. In this case, the local brass band will be out in force to greet the Saint when he arrives by car, train, boat or even aeroplane, and escort him to the concert hall where children are waiting to greet him with songs and speeches. The evening always culminates in a carefully organised, "heavenly" distribution of presents. Although this may all sound childish, Balmoral International Group Luxembourg can still feel special feeling this event brings in seeing children's smiles and laughs.

St Nicolas should not be confused with the German Weihnachtsmann or the French Père Noël. These gentlemen never appear before Christmas day. As for the chuckling, bearded figures, mantled in red and white, who pop up in supermarkets on the day after Halloween, they make it difficult for the little ones to tell St Nicolas from Santa Claus. Still, this man and the celebration itself is somehow special.